

# Service Area Plan

## Department of Social Services

### Income Benefits (45201)

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## Service Area Background Information

### Service Area Description

This service area funds the cash assistance payments made to no income and extremely low income families as part of one of the Commonwealth's key safety net programs, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program. To be eligible for the program, a family must include a dependent child and have income of approximately 25 percent or less of the poverty threshold, about \$7,000 per year for a family of three. Additionally, participants are required to work or participate in a work activity as a condition of their continued eligibility. No participant may receive more than 60 months of TANF cash assistance during her or his lifetime. The average payment is \$271 per month, and most families stay on cash assistance less than one year with more than half leaving assistance within 6 months.

### Service Area Alignment to Missio

By assisting needy families, the TANF cash assistance payments help individuals triumph over poverty and shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities. The TANF program enables the Commonwealth's most vulnerable and needs families to meet their basic human needs and rebuild their lives. This assistance often helps those served avoid the unfortunate trade-off between housing, food and medical care.

### Service Area Statutory Authority

- Title IV-A of the Social Security Act
- 45 CFR 260 - 286
- Code of Virginia, §63.2-600-607, 612, 613, 614, 617, 618
- 22 VAC 40-295

Federal TANF laws and regulations provide the basic structure for the block grant, the use of funds, and the required performance levels. The state code provides basic eligibility requirements. More detailed eligibility criteria are contained in the state regulation.

### Service Area Customer Base

Customer(s)	Served	Potential
Low income individuals and families	150,000	254,000

### Anticipated Changes In Service Area Customer Bas

From 2000 to 2003 (most recent Census data), the number of Virginians living in poverty increased 28% with 740,000 Virginians now living below the federal poverty threshold. This increase is likely to continue driving increases in the number of potential eligible households and the number of successful applicants enrolled in the program.

### Service Area Partners

Local departments of Social Services

State agencies

### Service Area Products and Services

- Economic assistance to low income families/individuals or nutrition, child care, health care eligibility, and financial assistance to low income families/individuals
- Financial support for children

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#### Factors Impacting Service Area Products and Services

Reauthorization of TANF is pending at the federal level. Congressional proposals related to TANF reauthorization could have major implications for service delivery in Virginia. Additionally, inflation erodes the purchasing power of the cash assistance grant because the grants are in no way indexed or contain a cost of living increase as do other safety net programs including Food Stamps. Grant levels have only been updated once in the last 20 years (July 2000). Without an annual increase to keep pace with inflation, the value of the assistance provided to the most vulnerable Virginians will continue to diminish. Virginia has one of the lowest cash assistance benefit levels in the nation (41st).

#### Anticipated Changes To Service Area Products and Service

Direct deposit of funds, rather than check issuance of benefits is now available. The Department of Social Services will promote this option and will over time, convert more cases to the direct deposit payment method.

#### Service Area Financial Summary

TANF cash assistance payments are funded by a combination of federal (53 %) and general fund (47%). The federal funds come from the State Family Assistance Grant, commonly referred to as the TANF Block Grant.

	<u>Fiscal Year 2007</u>		<u>Fiscal Year 2008</u>	
	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Nongeneral Fund</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Nongeneral Fund</u>
<b>Base Budget</b>	\$55,887,191	\$63,400,387	\$55,887,191	\$63,400,387
<b>Changes To Base</b>	\$0	(\$589,155)	\$0	(\$589,155)
<b>SERVICE AREA TOTAL</b>	<b>\$55,887,191</b>	<b>\$62,811,232</b>	<b>\$55,887,191</b>	<b>\$62,811,232</b>

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## Service Area Objectives, Measures, and Strategies

### Objective 45201.01

#### ***To efficiently provide financial assistance to needy families with children***

Within Virginia, there are many families that are poor and without the financial means to meet basic needs.

#### **This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:**

- Enhance the independence, well-being and personal responsibility of customers  
( This objective supports Goal #1 of the VSSS Strategic Plan by enhancing the well-being of customers as well as supporting the Council on Virginia's Future long term objectives to "Inspire and support Virginians toward healthy lives and strong, resilient families.")

#### **This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):**

- **Measure 45201.01.01**

***Total number of payments made by direct deposit.***

**Measure Type:** Output

**Measure Frequency:** Quarterly

**Measure Baseline:** New measure, baseline data not available. Baseline will be established using FY06 data.

**Measure Target:** Specific target will be determined once baseline is established.

**Measure Source and Calculation:**

The data will be derived from ADAPT payment records.

#### **Objective 45201.01 Has the Following Strategies:**

- Expand the use of direct deposit and financial literacy education.
- Ensure that the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency are met by providing forms in multiple languages.
- Revise applications and policy for purposes of simplification.